

How can I protect my health?

If you decide to get a tattoo or piercing, go to a clean and professional shop or studio. Ask about what they do to prevent infection.

A safe tattooist or piercer will:

- ☑ Have an autoclave (a machine used to sterilize equipment). He or she should sterilize equipment after each customer.
- ☑ Always use new needles. He or she should open the needle package in front of you.
- ☑ Wash his or her hands and put on a new pair of latex gloves.
- ☑ Put new ink into a disposable container for each customer. Blood can easily contaminate the inks.
- ☑ Use new, disposable razors for shaving skin.
- ☑ Use new, sterilized jewelry for any body piercing.
- ☑ Be willing to discuss safety and provide you with aftercare information.



For more information about Hepatitis or HIV

Call your health care provider, your local health department or contact



at

www.health.mo.gov/hepatitisc
www.cdc.gov

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
Section for Disease Prevention
P.O. Box 570
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0570
AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER
Services provided on a non-discriminatory basis.

Tattoo and Body Piercing Safety

HIV, Hepatitis &
Other Risks

TATTOO AND BODY PIERCING SAFETY

Are you thinking about getting a tattoo or piercing? Here are some things to consider...

Getting a tattoo or piercing is a very personal decision. Of course you'll want to ask yourself why you want a tattoo or piercing and how having one will impact your life. You'll also want to make sure you don't get any diseases or infections from unsterilized equipment. You definitely want to consider your health and safety.

With so many people getting tattoos and piercings, it must be safe—right?

When a tattoo or piercing is done following safety precautions, the risk of disease and infection is low. But the tattoo and piercing regulations vary from place to place, so it may be hard to know if an artist is trained in safety procedures. Because of that, you will need to understand your risks and make sure the artist has your health and safety in mind.

How can I be sure a tattooist or piercer will have my safety in mind?

In some places, a studio will need to have a health or business license. Going to a licensed artist or studio may give you a better chance of finding someone who follows safety precautions. You can also ask what kind of training the artist has and ask specific questions about sterilization. Ask if he or she has an autoclave. Ask if he or she uses new needles and would be willing to open the needle package in front of you.

Fresh ink

Some of the health risks...

Tattoos and piercings are both done with needles. That makes the risks similar to that of any needle use. Hepatitis and HIV are the biggest risks. Infections from open wounds, reactions to inks or metals and scarring are also possible. But you can reduce the risks if you use new clean needles. Sterilize all equipment in an autoclave and follow proper safety precautions.

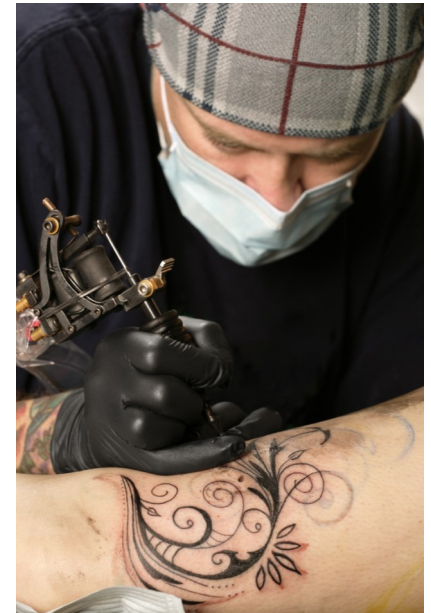
If I ask about safety, will an artist think I don't trust him?

No. Any reputable tattooist or piercer should be willing to talk about safety. If you're not comfortable and completely sure that he or she is taking precautions, don't have the work done by that person.



Can you really get hepatitis and HIV from a tattoo or piercing?

Hepatitis B and C can easily be spread through unsterilized equipment—**hepatitis is very contagious** because the viruses can live in dried blood for days. HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, may also be passed through unsterilized tattoo or piercing needles.



Other health issues to consider...

Don't get a tattoo or piercing if you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The same would apply to the tattoo artist. You'll both be more aware of safety if you're sober. Also, don't let a friend tattoo or pierce you at home or at a party—it is much more difficult to properly sterilize the equipment if you are not working in a professional setting.